

# Chicago Bar Foundation Report

**The Chicago  
Bar  
Foundation** Ensuring  
access  
to justice  
for all

## Tackling a Big Problem

**By Kimball R. Anderson**

After the release of a recent, groundbreaking study\* showing that Illinois legal aid attorneys earn starting salaries, on average, of less than \$40,000 per year, are saddled with high debt, and are unable to stay in their chosen profession because of the financial burdens, the CBF decided to tackle the problem. The CBF addressed the problem by launching earlier this year a first-of-its-kind, community-wide campaign. Never before tried in the United States, or anywhere for that matter, our inaugural Investing in Justice Campaign was intended to raise funds to increase the salaries of our community's legal aid lawyers to a level at which these attorneys can afford to stay in their profession and enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

The Campaign was a huge success. We raised over \$900,000 and have now distributed this money in the form of special salary grants to nearly 30 Chicago-area public interest organizations.

*\*Investing in Justice: A Framework for Effective Recruitment and Retention of Illinois Legal Aid Attorneys*, published by The Chicago Bar Foundation and the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice, November 2006 (available at [www.chicagobarfoundation.org](http://www.chicagobarfoundation.org)).

### An Ambitious Goal

Because legal aid attorneys form the backbone of the dozens of legal aid organizations serving vulnerable Chicagoans, the leadership for the CBF's inaugural Investing in Justice Campaign, under the direction of Campaign Chair Anton R. Valukas, determined that 100% of the funds raised would be used to directly address a growing financial crisis facing legal aid attorneys: the combination of grossly inadequate legal aid salaries and skyrocketing law school debt, both of which are forcing more and more dedicated lawyers to forgo these careers. We decided that reversing this trend is the most immediate priority for increasing the capacity of our pro bono and legal aid system.

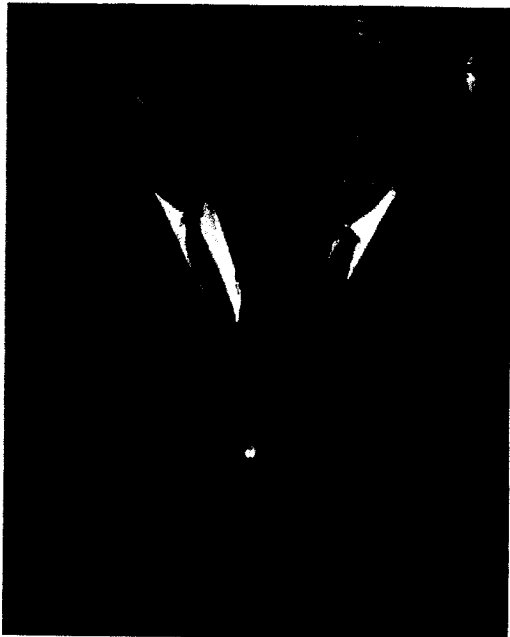
Although the CBF has been at the forefront of increasing the availability of loan forgiveness and loan repayment assistance programs for legal aid attorneys—a key part of the solution to the crisis—we knew that we had to do more to get legal aid salaries to a level that allows dedicated lawyers to stay in their positions for the long term. Thanks to more than 1,600 Chicago lawyers and other legal professionals—and the many firms and corporations that matched individual contributions—we not only achieved our ambitious goal, but we also set the stage for a comprehensive solution to the crisis within the next five

years. Legal aid lawyers throughout the city received a meaningful and much-needed salary increase, along with the morale boost that came with that. We also provided the necessary “jolt” to the system that has set the stage for a long-term solution.

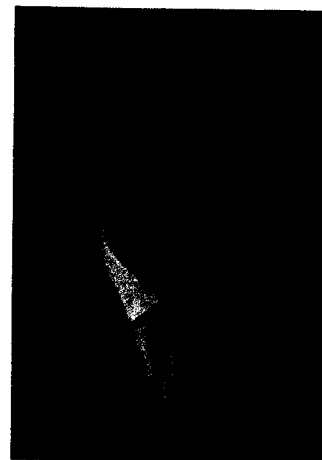
### Immediate Impact and Necessary Change

The CBF used 100% of the \$904,000 in 2007 Campaign funds to create a special grant pool that provides a significant step toward resolving this crisis. As a result of these grants:

- Each of the 260 full-time legal aid attorneys serving the Chicago area received a much-needed salary increase averaging \$3,700 per attorney, with many receiving as much as a 10% raise.
- As a condition of receiving these special grant funds, all of the major pro bono and legal aid organizations in Chicago also developed and adopted a board-approved plan to raise their attorney salaries to the level of comparable government service positions over the next three to five years and to address non-compensation issues impacting attorney retention.
- As part of the grant process, the CBF is also providing a series of free management training programs for executive directors and managing attorneys at these organizations.



CBF President Thomas Z. Hayward, Jr. and past President Kimball R. Anderson are gearing up for another successful *CBF Investing in Justice Campaign* in 2008.



Anton R. Valukas (above left), Chairman of Jenner & Block, chaired the CBF's inaugural Campaign and led the way to its extraordinary success. Dan Webb (above right), Chairman of Winston & Strawn is ready to build on last year's momentum as Chair of the 2008 *CBF Investing in Justice Campaign*.

#### The First Step in the Process

As Valukas stated at the end of the 2007 Campaign, "The Campaign was an inspiring example of the amazing impact that Chicago's legal community can have when we come together as one." The challenge now is to do our part to ensure that legal aid organizations can meet the long-term commitments of increasing salaries to levels that will allow dedicated attorneys to continue doing their critical work. In short, this year's salary grants were just a down payment toward the long-term goal of bringing legal aid salaries in parity with other public service positions in our profession.

#### Looking Ahead to the 2008 Investing in Justice Campaign

Everyone who participated in Year 1 of the Campaign should be proud of this groundbreaking success, which not only made an immediate impact on the crisis, but also put our community on a path to a long-term solution within the next five years. Other funders of legal aid are supporting this effort as well, and the legal aid organizations themselves are redoubling their commitment to develop more resources for their programs. But the legal community needs to continue to step up and do its part both to ensure the long-term success of this initiative and to help our pro bono and legal aid organizations serve the many vulnerable Chicagoans who are still unable to obtain

legal assistance that is often critical to their safety and independence.

Fortunately, the 2008 CBF Investing in Justice Campaign is off to a great start. My partner Dan Webb, Chairman of Winston & Strawn LLP, has agreed to chair the 2008 Campaign. Once again, 100% of the Campaign proceeds will go toward our CBF grants to build the capacity of the pro bono and legal aid system, with a primary emphasis on continuing last year's successful efforts to increase salaries for our community's legal aid attorneys, the core assets of the system.

#### Together, Great Things Are Possible

We proved with the first year of the Campaign that great things are possible when our legal community comes together, and we are just scratching the surface of what we can achieve. The 2007 Campaign was a solid step toward tackling the crisis facing legal aid attorneys in our community. With your help, we can build on the momentum of last year's success and get closer to our ultimate goal of ensuring access to justice for all Chicagoans. ■

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*Kimball R. Anderson is a partner at Winston & Strawn LLP and Past President of the CBF.*